

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SEC-01 NSC-05 EB-07 COME-00 PA-01 PRS-01

USIA-06 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 AGR-05 SS-15 SP-02 L-02

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DRAFTED BY ARA/CEN/CR:MMBOVA:HLB

APPROVED BY ARA/CEN - DAVID LAZAR

SEC - D.GANTZ (PHONE)

SEC - S.SPORTAIN (PHONE)

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P 221334Z MAY 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:

SUBJECT: GOCR REQUEST FOR SEC INVESTIGATION OF BANANA
COMPANIES

1. FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE PREPARED FOR NOON BRIEFING
MAY, 21, ON IF ASKED BASIS:

Q: HAS THE GOVERNMENT OF COSTA RICA ASKED FOR AN SEC IN-
VESTIGATION OF THE U.S. BANANA COMPANIES OPERATING IN COSTA
RICA?

A: YES. THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY HERE CONTACTED THE STATE
DEPARTMENT ON TUESDAY AND REQUESTED THAT THE DEPARTMENT IN
TURN REQUEST THE SEC TO INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITY OF
BRIBERY OR OTHER, UNSPECIFIED IMPROPER ACTIVITIES BY ANY OF
THE COMPANIES IN COSTA RICA. WE WERE NOT THEN AWARE OF THE
AP STORY WHICH APPEARED IN YESTERDAY AFTERNOON'S WASHINGTON
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STAR. THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY MADE NO MENTION OF THAT

STORY, OR OF THE STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO THE COSTA RICAN FOREIGN MINISTER NOR DID THEY GIVE US ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT OF COSTA RICA HAD ANY EVIDENCE THAT ANY IMPROPER ACTIVITIES HAD IN FACT TAKEN PLACE.

Q: IS THE DEPARTMENT ATTEMPTING TO FIND OUT WHETHER, IN

FACT, ANY EVIDENCE EXISTS OF ILLEGAL OR IMPROPER ACTIVITIES SUCH AS THOSE ALLEGED?

A: AS SOON AS WE SAW THE STAR STORY WE CONTACTED THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY AND REQUESTED THAT THEY FURNISH US WITH ANY EVIDENCE IN THE POSSESSION OF THE GOCR WHICH MIGHT CONSTITUTE A BASIS FOR THE INVESTIGATION REQUESTED.

Q: HAVE YOU PASSED THE REQUEST OF THE GOVERNMENT OF COSTA RICA TO THE SEC?

A: THE SEC IS AWARE OF THE REQUEST.

Q: WILL THE SEC UNDERTAKE THE INVESTIGATION?

A: YOU'LL HAVE TO ASK THE SEC.

Q: WHY WOULD THE GOVERNMENT OF COSTA RICA ASK FOR AN INVESTIGATION IF IT DIDN'T HAVE ANY EVIDENCE OF WRONG-DOING?

A: WE CANNOT, OF COURSE, SPEAK FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF COSTA RICA, NOR WILL WE SPECULATE AS TO WHAT THEIR MOTIVES MIGHT BE. HOWEVER, AS YOU KNOW, STORIES APPEARING IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS AGO TOLD OF THE SUBPOENA ISSUED BY THE U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK TO UNITED BRANDS, ORDERING UNITED TO FURNISH ANY RECORDS RELATING TO PAYMENTS TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN COSTA RICA AND OTHER COUNTRIES. WE DO KNOW THAT THESE STORIES WERE TAKEN BY MANY PEOPLE IN COSTA RICA TO IMPLY THAT THE U.S. ATTORNEYS OFFICE THOUGHT SOME SUCH ACTIVITIES HAD TAKEN PLACE.

2. NO QUESTIONS ASKED AT NOON BRIEFING. EMBASSY FREE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DRAW ON ABOVE FOR GUIDANCE AS NECESSARY, BUT SUBSTANCE OF Q AND A'S 1,2, AND 3 ABOVE SUBSEQUENTLY GIVEN TO WALL STREET JOURNAL IN TELEPHONE INTERVIEW. INGERSOLL

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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